

Cover story

You're invited to EROS event

By KRISTEN PARISH LUETH

Ten miles north of I-90, a sprawling science complex sits quietly in the grassy hills near Garretson, its gigantic satellite dishes cutting into the prairie sky.

Inside, more than 500 employees perform a service sometimes unrecognized by the outside community.

This weekend is an effort to change that.

On Saturday, in honor of its 25th anniversary, the Earth Resources Observation Systems Data Center will pause from its duties of collecting and storing satellite data to welcome the public to a free open house.

The theme is "Exploring the Changing Planet" and that's what the event is all about, says Ronald Beck, technical information specialist at EROS.

"We invite people not just to celebrate but to teach them about how the data is acquired and how it is used to study our planet," says Beck. "This is a chance for the taxpayers to see their buildings."

A 5-kilometer competitive run and 2.5K fun run/walk will open the days' events at 8 a.m.

Beginning at 9 a.m., informative and fun activities for all ages are planned, including hands-on demonstrations, tethered hot-air balloon rides, a sky diving exhibition and educational booths.

Live entertainment will run throughout the day and a food court will be open.

The main speaker will be Mary Louise Cleave, who

EVENT SCHEDULE

■ **What:** 25th Anniversary Open House.

■ **When:** 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

■ **Where:** EROS Data Center. Take Interstate 90 to Exit 402 and go 10 miles north on County Highway 121. Signs will direct the public to parking and events.

■ **Cost:** Free admission.

■ **Entertainment:** Left Bank Jazz Society, 9 to 9:45 a.m.; Flandreau Indian dancers, 10:15 to 10:45 a.m.; singer David Lee Brown, noon to 12:45 p.m.; pianist Stephen Marc, 2 to 2:45 p.m.

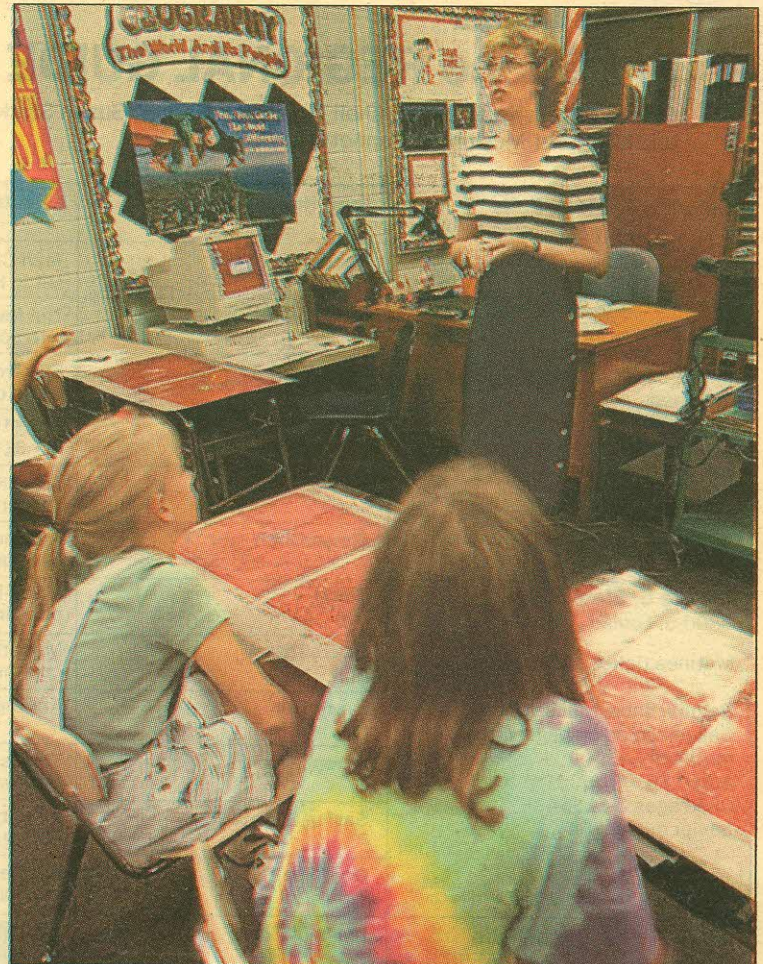
served as a mission specialist on the Space Shuttle in 1985 and 1989. Cleave is an environmental engineer at the NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland. She will speak at 11 a.m. and again at 1 p.m.

Ann Vogelmann, an environmental science instructor at Augustana College, will be attending this Saturday's event with her daughter, Connie, a fifth-grader at Brandon Valley Elementary, and her husband, Jim, who is a principal scientist at EROS.

"My daughter and I are looking forward to seeing the facility where her dad works because it's a place we really don't get to see very often, at least not to this extent."

Vogelmann says she regularly takes her students to EROS for the experience. "I believe it's a way to expose them to the important technology used to study environmental problems."

Tours of the facility on Sat-



Ken Klotzbach/Argus Leader

EROS software engineer Carrie Gallup talks to sixth-graders about the data center this week at Patrick Henry Middle School.

urday will take curiosity-seekers to areas open to the public for the first time, including the archives where millions of aerial and satellite photos will be made accessible – even some once considered classified information by intelligence agencies.

Guests will also be able to tour advanced computer facilities being prepared for the next generation of Earth-observing satellites to be launched in 1999.

Satellite images of local areas and from around the world will be on display to show how information

available from the center is used for monitoring the effects of natural and man-made actions to the land mass of the planet.

"Visitors will get to see aerial images of the town of Spencer, before and after the May 30 tornado, and the flooded areas of Day County in northeast South Dakota," says Beck.

Photographs revealing the devastation of hurricanes and forest fires are also on display.

For further information, contact Beck at 605-594-6551.